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Champlain College praised as commuter-friendly

By Aki Soga
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Champlain College has been recognized for its efforts to help students and employees cut down car use by being designated one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters by the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

For Champlain College, located in a crowded residential neighborhood in Burlington's Hill Section, parking and traffic are always issues, said David Provost, vice president of finance and administration.

In April, the college tried a program that allows students, faculty and staff to ride Chittenden County Transportation Authority buses free.

"The response was excellent. A lot of it had to do with good timing; gas prices were rising," Provost said. "The good part of it is that people realized taking the bus is pretty easy."

The demonstration was so effective that the bus program, a partnership between CCTA and the Campus Area Transportation Management Association, or CATMA, has been adopted full time by the college.

"The result was us receiving this award," Provost said.

Champlain College joins 15 other employers with a Best Workplaces for Commuters designation.

Once an institution wins the recognition, it must file an annual report to show that it continues to meet the criteria of the award to stay on the list.

For those affiliated with CATMA, which includes Champlain College, the University of Vermont and Fletcher Allen Health Care - all Best Workplaces for Commuters -- that task falls to Meredith Schuft, marketing director for the organization.

Schuft said being the kind of employer that makes the commuters list has its advantages.

"You're making a statement that you're an environmentally conscious employer. It kind of identifies you as an employer that offers commuting benefits to your employees," she said.

Champlain's programs reduce commuting costs for all commuters by taking cars off the road and reducing traffic congestion, she said.

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